



*Never,  
ever,  
ever  
shake  
your  
baby!*

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# *“I didn’t know shaking a baby could hurt!”*

*Too often this is the cry heard when it’s too late and the damage has already been done.*

*Many people don’t realize that violently shaking a child is very harmful.*

## *It’s true.*

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Jerking or violently shaking a baby is equal to dropping a baby head-first onto a hard surface from a height of ten feet. It could cause permanent brain damage, blindness or, in some cases, even death.

## *So why does it happen?*

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The stress of caring for a crying baby can cause feelings of frustration, anger and resentment. These feelings are frightening because we think we should always feel love for infants. Sometimes adults shake crying babies thinking they’re not hurting them because they’re not hitting them. But children have died from being shaken.

## *What can you do?*

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Realize that it’s normal to have mixed feelings about babies when they cry. Babies cry for many different reasons and ALL healthy babies cry. Don’t take this personally. Babies express themselves the only way they know how - by crying.

## *Comfort a crying baby.*

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Babies cry when they are tired, hungry, uncomfortable or sick. Babies also cry when they are bored, overstimulated or lonely. Some babies even get into a pattern of crying at the same time each day. Other babies may have “colic.” Sometimes a baby cries no matter what you do to try to comfort him.

If a baby is still crying and is not hungry, wet or running a fever, try some of these tips:

Lay your baby down in his crib and walk away to see if he’ll calm down on his own.

Hold your baby close to your body and walk or rock him while talking or singing softly.

While sitting, lay your baby face down across your knees, gently patting his back.

Try a wind-up bed or swing to gently rock your baby to sleep. Babies less than 6 months old need to have their heads supported when using a wind-up swing.

## *Remember, never leave your baby unsupervised.*

For more helpful tips, ask your family doctor or pediatrician for other suggestions.

## *Develop a support system.*

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Give yourself a break from your baby from time to time.

Don’t be afraid to ask friends and relatives to help you.

Talk to someone about your feelings.

Join a parent support group.

Get help when you need it.

*(Help numbers are listed on the back of this brochure.)*

*If you need help, call:*

*During daytime hours:*

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**Local Social Services Department**

*24 Hours A Day*

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**State Child Abuse and Neglect  
Hotline  
1-800-552-7096**

**Virginia Family Violence Hotline  
1-800-838-8238**

*Remember:*

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When your baby is crying and you feel:

**Overwhelmed  
Burned Out  
Depressed  
Tired**

**Frustrated  
Irritable  
Afraid  
Angry**

**STOP!**

*Don't ever shake your baby!*



PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



**Children's Hospital  
of The King's Daughters**

*Norfolk, Virginia*

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